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FRED BROWN/NEW DELHI

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INDIAN-CHINESE CONTACTS

ANNCR:

CHINA APPEARS TO HAVE EMBARKED ON A CONCERTED EFFORT TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE IN SOUTH ASIA. ONE TARGET OF THE NEW CHINESE EFFORT IS INDIA, AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN IN NEW DELHI:

VOICE:

ONE INDICATION OF CHINESE INTENTIONS CAME DURING THE RECENT VISIT OF CHINESE VICE-PREMIER TENG HSIAO PING TO KATMANDU. MISTER TENG HAILED THE NEW TREND TOWARD CLOSER RELATIONS AMONG SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES AND LET IT BE KNOWN THAT CHINA IS ANXIOUS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH NEW DELHI. AS LATE AS LAST YEAR, CHINA HAD BEEN OPENLY BACKING PAKISTAN AND CRITICIZING INDIA FOR ALLEGEDLY SEEKING HEGEMONY IN THE AREA.

AS EVIDENCE OF WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED A MORE EVEN-HANDED POLICY TOWARD ITS ASIAN NEIGHBORS, A TOP CHINESE OFFICIAL, WANG PING NAN, IS NOW VISITING PAKISTAN AND WILL LATER BE GOING TO BOTH BANGLADESH AND INDIA. MISTER WANG IS PRESIDENT OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION FOR FRIENDSHIP WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES AND ENJOYS MINISTERIAL STATUS IN PEKING. CHINESE DIPLOMATIC SOURCES HAVE LEAKED REPORTS THAT MISTER WANG IS CARRYING AN INVITATION FOR INDIAN PRIME MINISTER MORARJI DESAI TO VISIT CHINA. A CHINESE TRADE MISSION HAS BEEN TOURING INDIA SINCE EARLY IN FEBRUARY AND HAS INDICATED THAT CHINA WOULD LIKE TO INCREASE TRADE AND OTHER FORMS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH INDIA.

A NUMBER OF EXPLANATIONS HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD FOR CHINA'S NEW OPENINGS TOWARD INDIA. ONE OBVIOUS FACTOR IS CHINA'S CONTINUING RIVALRY WITH THE SOVIET UNION. IN PEKING'S VIEW,

INDIA'S NEW JANATA GOVERNMENT IS LESS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD MOSCOW THEN ITS PREDESSOR. PEKING OFFICIALS HAVE VOICED SATISFACTION AND NEW DELHI IS NO LONGER EMPHASIZING ITS SPECIAL RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS. ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR IS BELIEVED TO BE THE DETERMINATION OF CHINA'S PRESENT PRAGMATIC LEADERSHIP, NOW THAT THE DOCTRINAIRE GANG OF FOUR HAS BEEN DEFEATED, TO MAKE LIFE A LITTLE EASIER FOR THE CHINESE PEOPLE. CHINESE LEADERS HAVE SHOWN IN AGREEMENTS RECENTLY CONCLUDED WITH SUCH NATIONS AS JAPAN AND THE PHILIPPINES THAT THEY ARE READY TO TAKE HELP FROM WHERE EVER THEY CAN GET IT.

SO MUCH FOR CHINESE INTENTIONS. WHAT OF THE INDIAN RESPONSE? INDIAN LEADERS, WHILE WELCOMING TRENDS TOWARD NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, ARE INCLINED NEVERTHELESS TO BE CAUTIOUS. IN SPITE OF THE OVERTURES TOWARD INCREASED TRADE AND MORE PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE TYPE EXCHANGES, INDIAN OFFICIALS HAVE NOTED LITTLE INCLINATION ON CHINA'S PART TO DEAL SUBSTANTIVELY WITH SOME OF THE SORE POINTS. THE BIGGEST SORE POINT IS THE TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND KILOMETERS OF INDIAN TERRITORY ANNEXED BY CHINA DURING THE 1962 BORDER WAR. OFFICIALS ALSO POINT OUT THAT CHINA IS STILL EXTENDING ARMS SUPPORT AND TRAINING TO GUERRILLA TRIBESMEN ALONG INDIA'S NORTHEAST FRONTIER.

PRIME MINISTER DESAI HAS SAID HE IS WILLING TO TALK WITH ANY CHINESE LEADER ABOUT NORMALIZING RELATIONS BUT HE HAS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT INDIA MUST REGAIN THE TERRITORY LOST IN THE 1962 BORDER WAR. INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, A.B. VAJPAYEE, RECENTLY TOLD NEWSMEN THAT INDIA HAS TWO OPTIONS ON THE BORDER QUESTION. ONE IS TO TELL CHINA THAT UNLESS THE BORDER ISSUE IS RESOLVED, INDIA WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH PEKING. THE

OTHER, HE SAID, IS TO PROCEED WITH STEPS TOWARD NORMALIZING RELATIONS AND SEE WHETHER THIS LEADS TO SOLUTION OF THE BORDER QUESTION. INDIA, HE SAID, HAD DECIDED TO ADOPT THE SECOND COURSE AND NOW LOOKS FORWARD TO EXPANDED CONTACTS ON A VARIETY OF FIELDS. BUT MISTER VAJPAYEE CONCEDED THAT THE BORDER ISSUE WITH CHINA CANNOT BE SOLVED IN WEEKS OR EVEN MONTHS.

WJL/RCS